

What is the Citizen Foster Care Review Board?

The Kentucky General Assembly created the Citizen Foster Care Review Board in 1982 in response to federal legislation aimed at decreasing the amount of time children spend in foster care. Today 791 volunteers serve on 149 review boards throughout Kentucky. CFCRB volunteers are appointed by their chief Family Court or District Court judge to review the cases of children placed in the custody of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services due to dependency, neglect or abuse.

Volunteers regularly review each child's case with a particular focus on the out-of-home placement and the permanency plan established by the Cabinet. Based on information obtained from the reviews, the volunteer makes recommendations to the judge to ensure the child is placed in a safe and permanent home in a timely manner.

In FY 2013, the volunteers held 1,628 meetings and conducted 21,080 reviews on 10,491 children in out-of-home care. The increase in board meetings can be attributed in part to the addition of seven new review boards and the increase in interested party reviews.

The CFCRB operates within the Department of Family and Juvenile Services of the Administrative Office of the Courts in Frankfort. The AOC is the administrative arm of the Kentucky Judicial Branch.

Who are CFCRB volunteers?

CFCRB volunteers come from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, but all share a genuine concern for children and their welfare.

Of the 791 volunteers, 85 percent are female and 42 percent have backgrounds in education, medicine, law, social work and psychology. The volunteers range in age from 24 to 87, with an average age of 56. The average length of service is six years, which demonstrates their commitment to the children they serve.

What are the requirements for becoming a CFCRB volunteer?

Those interested in volunteering must complete an initial six-hour training session and consent to a criminal record report from the Administrative Office of the Courts and a Central Registry check from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

New volunteers are trained on the following topics:

- CHFS procedures
- Department for Community Based Services procedures
- Dependency, neglect and abuse case forms
- Court processes
- Mental health needs of children in out-of-home care
- Process for conducting a review

Once a volunteer has provided the background checks and completed the initial training, a recommendation is made to the chief judge of the local Family Court or District Court for the volunteer to be appointed to the local board. Judges appoint volunteers for three-year terms. Volunteers are given a comprehensive handbook on the program and opportunities to earn six hours of continuing education, which is required each year.

What cases do CFCRB volunteers review?

Pursuant to KRS 620.270, CFCRB volunteers review the case of each child who is placed into the custody of the CHFS by a court order for temporary custody or commitment. The reviews are conducted in the county or counties served by the local CFCRB board.

The cases include those of youth whose commitments have been extended, children placed for adoptions that have not been finalized, children who have been returned home but remain committed and young adults whose out-of-home commitments have been extended. Children and young adults are also subject to review if they were originally committed as dependent, neglected or abused but have been recommitted as status or public offenders, provided the commitment was not interrupted.

What resources are needed to conduct a review?

The CFCRB reviews the case of each child or young adult who is in temporary custody or is committed by the court in the county or counties served by the board. The reviews are conducted through the paper case file or an interactive meeting called an interested party review.

Each review board has access to all pertinent information and records maintained by the Cabinet on the parents or person exercising custodial control or supervision for the child being reviewed. The board also has access to all pertinent information and records of the court, the Cabinet, and public and private child-care facilities for the child the CFCRB is reviewing. Information and records include, but are not limited to, case permanency plans, case progress reports and case records.

Each local board may request in writing, with a notice of five work days, for the employees of the Cabinet and other agencies to appear at local board meetings.

How often are reviews conducted?

According to statute, every child must be reviewed at least once every six months. But CFCRB volunteers may review cases more often if deemed necessary by the board. The CFCRB reports its findings to the court and to the Cabinet.

Where are reviews conducted?

Reviews are conducted in every county in Kentucky. Larger counties may have multiple boards. Smaller counties in the same judicial circuit or district may join together for a combined board.

The Chief Family Court or Chief District Court judge designates where the review will take place. Reviews are often conducted at the local office of the Department for Community Based Services. Many of the interested party reviews are conducted in local judicial centers.

Where are CFCRB reviews conducted if a child moves to another county?

Pursuant to KRS 620.270(1), if a child moves to another county due to a pre-adoptive placement or if the Cabinet has moved the child, the responsibility for reviewing cases remains with the local review board that serves the county of commitment/temporary custody.

When does the CFCRB stop conducting reviews?

Pursuant to KRS 620.270, reviews by a CFCRB shall cease when the child is no longer in the custody of the Cabinet or an adoption has been finalized. The case record will document the release.